

Los Caballos Equestrian Campground Project – Stakeholder Workshop
MEETING NOTES
Descanso Elementary School; October 19, 2005

Participants:

Mary Lee Olsen—Facilitator (M)
Natural Resources (NR)
Equestrians (E)
Joseph Turner (JT)

Cleo Thompson (CT)
State Parks (SP)
EDAW (EDAW)

Group Presentations (comments & proposals)

Equestrians:

- NO to “state-of-the-art” campground (we like it rustic)
- Keep 18 sites; not requesting additional sites
- Open ASAP (before July 2008)
- Restroom signed off prior to fire (approved by California Environmental Quality Act) – use same planned restroom as funded by the state // private money
- Restrooms don’t need to be on septic system – could accept “vault” toilets vs. no facilities; would like to have showers if possible
- Move existing sites 14, 15, & 16 to old day-use area & construct new day-use (open to discussion about location of Day Use & Campsite #s14-16)
- All proposed plans are unacceptable for numerous reasons!
- Place fencing along roadway to protect sensitive areas/”Burial” sites
- Not moving the campground would be least impactful to the resources & most cost effective
- The ancestors like the horses there, they protected the corrals!

Natural Resources:

- The concepts don’t include a “No Impact” (for Natural Resources) project, which they want to see
- Cuyamaca Meadowfoam is listed endangered plant; California Endangered Species Act protects Cuyamaca Meadowfoam.
- Avoidance of impacts to state-listed plant is preferred alternative under CESA
- Alternative that avoids impacts is required under CEQA
- Email comments from Dr. Bauder read
 - Impacts to Limnantes documented in 1992 ecological monitoring report to State Parks & CA Dept. of Fish & Game (Dr. Ellen Bauder)
 - “Los Caballos Equestrian Camp has, and is, severely impacting Limnantes”
 - “This camp should be moved to a less sensitive site and the damaged habitat restored”
- Limnantes population numbers are very limited; this population is the largest of Cuyamaca Meadowfoam in the world
- Recovery on public property allows best opportunity for recovery; private property populations are too small to ensure recovery.
- Email from Tom Chester re: parish’s

- Avoidance is best alternative; relocate in another area of the Park; there must be another place in Park to put the campground
 - o mitigation for rebuilding at current site would be expensive (time & money)
- Spring surveys recommended

Question:

JT What percentage of Meadowfoam is in Park vs. in campground vs. elsewhere?

JT What value does the plant have to society?

SP Is Los Caballos within the Cuyamaca Meadowfoam core area of the entire population?

Native American/Cultural Resources:

(No representatives from either group were able to attend. Comments were posted by SP/EDAW from those received during earlier meetings & via correspondence. Comments were shared to facilitate a discussion with all groups.)

- Email comments from Susan Hector read:
 - placing campground on sacred site (sacred site covers entire campground)
 - no alternative acceptable
- This is a “sacred site” (one of the largest in southern CA); we don’t have very many “sacred sites”
- Impacts are irreversible; campground should never have been built there.
- The septic & restroom use is not acceptable within the cultural boundary
- Build a new campground outside the cultural boundary

Group Presentations (compromises)
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Cultural Resources:

(No representatives from the cultural group were able to attend. Comments were posted by SP/EDAW from those received during earlier meetings. Comments were shared to facilitate a discussion with all groups.)

- Construct a day-use area at the western most edge of the cultural boundary & construct a new campground elsewhere
- Build a bigger & better campground elsewhere
 - surely there is a better site in the Park
 - campground should not have been here
 - Native Americans have designated an area they feel is acceptable

Natural Resources:

- Move to less sensitive site
- Could accept construction of bathrooms, roads, corrals, etc. outside *Limnanthes* population, and fence around the population (lots of fencing).
- Possible to use existing road for entrance as long as crossing point does not affect the hydrology (therefore, changing habitat conditions)
- Concept #1 is mostly outside the “green zone” (extent of mapped *Limnanthes* population, shown on maps)

- If were to put the campground back at this location would still be potential for impact even if camp footprint avoided plant. There is always a possibility of impact where there is a public area adjacent to a plant population.

Question:

- E How could they make the existing campground work?
- NR As long as road crossing the “green zone” and drainage was changed to preserve natural hydrology and avoid impacts to the plant, it might be acceptable
- E What impacts are damaging the *Limnanthes* within the existing campground?
- NR Trampling (human & equine), foraging (equine), also roads and trails (even small foot paths) channel water away from its natural flow & from the plant. Roads & paths change the flow of water

Equestrians:

- Open campsites 1-9 [sites west side of drainage], this Spring (May 1, 2006), as a temporary facility (w/trails access) while new campground location is designed & constructed. The new campground should be equal to existing campground with similar connections to the trail system.
- ‘No facilities’ is OK; ‘vault toilet’ is OK - use what’s there, no new facilities.
- 2-3 members selected by equestrian community to consult & advise on new campground design; have major problems with the concepts presented to date.
- Rationale: Unacceptable to go without family-equestrian camp for 5+ years (2003-2008)
- Safe day-use area also needed now!

Additional Group Comments

- E Don’t see any compromises from other “2 sides”; our compromise has to be considered only with compromises from the others
- E Los Caballos is in the center of lots of trails, which makes this spot a “jewel”

Camping Available Now:

- E Grateful that Los Vaqueros was available this year, but it is closed now.
- SP Los Vaqueros has been open for family camping over the summer and on weekends through the end of this month.
- E They were unaware that Los Vaqueros is still open. It is not advertised anywhere.
- SP We’ll put that info on our website, but hope that Equestrians will help get the word out to their community.
- E Agree that they will

*Impacts on *Limnanthes*:*

- E Question if can use 1992 study as a baseline to address impacts of equestrian use over 30 years at Los Caballos.
- SP Burden of proof is on the project to show that it is not impacting, not the other way around

E Want day use in North end of Park

Camping Available Now:

SP We'll keep Los Vaqueros open for family camping until "Season" (snow) or start of construction on restroom forces the closure of the campground (may be mid November for construction start).

JT The compromise that Equestrians presented is best they can do, but they expect temporary use to be part of the compromise. Temporary use won't impact the resources. They had been using the campground prior to the fire so there will be no additional impacts for reopening the campground. If the equestrians are not immediately allowed to camp in Los Caballos temporarily, there is no incentive for compromise. We'll legally attack parks on the basis of policy, if this proposal is not completely accepted.

JT If it takes 3-4 years to get a campground, equestrians have no incentive to "play ball."

Public Meeting Changes:

E Originally SP had scheduled the public meeting for Nov. 2. The equestrian representative printed flyers and handed them out at equestrian events. The equestrian representative wondered why the date was changed.

SP SP scheduled the Nov. 2nd meeting on a very significant day for Native Americans. No one from Native American community would have been able to attend.

E The equestrian representative believed there will be many people that show up on Nov. 2 to attend.

SP We'll have someone there to apologize and redirect them to Nov. 9 date, plus take their comments if they can not come back

Alternative Sites:

E In regards to alternative locations in the park, many equestrians know places that would be acceptable for a campground.

SP We'll receive that input but will have to research the site with staff to avoid resource impacts.

E Use already impacted areas like Hual Cu Cuish.

EDAW Have to examine opening of temporary facility and its potential impacts. Will still have to do CEQA process, but could be a different level (not an EIR)

SP Any impacts to endangered plant will require permits which take time to process.

Equestrian Participation:

E Can the representatives from the equestrian community participate in the design of the campground?

SP Think about the 3 representatives equestrians want to represent them.

Public Meeting Format:

CT How many minutes will each speaker have at the public meeting?

SP The format for the Public Meeting has not been developed yet.

Additional Requests:

- There was also a question about who attended the other focus group/consultation meetings from Cultural and Native American communities. Names were read. Request was made for list of names. SP will check to see if we can give those out. If not, can they send comments to us to pass on to Native Americans?
- Request for the notes from this meeting
- Request from the equestrians for a small group meeting, face-to-face with Native Americans. SP (Tony) will try to facilitate such a meeting.